

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. **(currently amended)** A binder, comprising: ~~capable of applying binding forces to binding legs that have been inserted through passages formed in~~
a base extending in ~~[[the]]~~ a longitudinal direction, ~~characterized in that wherein~~
the base has a plurality of base-forming members that are moveable relative to each other ~~arranged relatively movably~~ along the longitudinal direction and ~~that can~~ form ~~[[the]]~~ passages in the base, and
binding legs insertable through the passages of the base;
wherein
~~[[that]]~~ each of the base-forming members has at least one operating portion that moves when the base-forming members are moved relative to each other, and
~~that it becomes possible to press or release~~ each of the binding legs is pressed or released by operating the corresponding operating portion in a predetermined manner.

2. **(currently amended)** A binder, comprising: ~~capable of applying binding forces to binding legs that have been inserted through passages formed in~~
a base extending in ~~[[the]]~~ a longitudinal direction, ~~characterized in that wherein~~
the base has a plurality of base-forming members that are moveable relative to each other ~~arranged relatively movably~~ along the longitudinal direction and ~~that can~~ form ~~[[the]]~~ passages in the base, and
binding legs insertable through the passages of the base;

wherein

[[that]] each of the base-forming members has first and second operating portions that move when the base-forming members are moved relative to each other,

[[that]] the second operating portions move away from each other and press the binding legs onto [[their]] binding positions when the first operating portions are moved toward each other, and

[[that]] the binding legs are released from the binding positions and the first operating portions move away from each other when the second operating portions are moved toward each other.

3. **(currently amended)** The binder according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the base-forming members are common in shape, and [[that]] the base is formed by combining the base-forming members.

4. **(currently amended)** The binder according to claim 2, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the base-forming members are common in shape, and [[that]] the base is formed by combining the base-forming members.

5. **(new)** The binder according to claim 1, wherein said base consists of two said base-forming members.

6. **(new)** The binder according to claim 5, wherein said base-forming members are identical and each of said base-forming members, including said at least one operating portion, is integrally made from a molded material.

7. **(new)** The binder according to claim 1, wherein each of said base-forming members defines one of the passages of said base, and has in a vicinity of an opening of said one passage a protrusion engageable with a serrated surface of one of the binding legs.

8. **(new)** The binder according to claim 1, wherein one of said base-forming members has a portion that is received and retained in a cavity of a holding element of the other base-forming member, whereby said base-forming members are slidably attached one to another.

9. **(new)** The binder according to claim 1, wherein each of said base-forming members includes, in the longitudinal direction:

- a first section carrying said at least one operating portion; and
- a second section that defines one of the passages of said base.

10. **(new)** The binder according to claim 9, wherein said at least one operating portion of each of said base-forming members has a general U shape and embraces the second section of the other base-forming member.

11. **(new)** The binder according to claim 9, wherein the second section of each of said base-forming members includes a stop element that engages said at least one operating portion of the other base-forming member, in a state where said at least one operating portion presses one of the binding legs, so as to prevent said at least one operating portion from releasing the binding leg.

12. **(new)** The binder according to claim 11, wherein the stop element is disengaged from said at least one operating portion when said at least one operating portion is pressed towards the pressed binding leg.

13. **(new)** The binder according to claim 10, wherein said at least one operating portion has two flexible portions each extending from a free end of one of two branches of the U shape toward the other of the two branches of the U shape.

14. **(new)** The binder according to claim 13, wherein each of said base-forming members includes a bulge element that releasably engages the flexible portions of said at least one operating portion of the other base-forming member, in a state where said at least one operating portion does not press the corresponding one of the binding legs.

15. **(new)** The binder according to claim 9, wherein, when said base-forming members are assembled together, said at least one operating portion of each of said base-forming members is slidable in the longitudinal direction from one side to other side of the passage of the other base-forming member.

16. **(new)** The binder according to claim 9, wherein for each of said base-forming members, said second section is about twice as wide as the first section.

17. **(new)** The binder according to claim 2, wherein said base consists of two said base-forming members.

18. **(new)** The binder according to claim 2, wherein one of said base-forming members has a portion that is received and retained in a cavity of a holding element of the other base-forming member, whereby said base-forming members are slidably attached one to another.

19. **(new)** The binder according to claim 2, wherein each of said base-forming members includes, in the longitudinal direction:

 a first section carrying said first and second operating portions; and

 a second section that defines one of the passages of said base;

 wherein said second operating portion of each of said base-forming members has a general U shape and embraces the second section of the other base-forming member.

20. **(new)** The binder according to claim 19, wherein said second operating portion has two flexible portions each extending from a free end of one of two branches of the U shape toward the other of the two branches of the U shape.